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AN
AFFECTIONATE APPEAL
TO
ALL DENOMINATIONS OF CHRISTIANS,
WHO BELIEVE IN
REGENERATION BY THE HOLY GHOST,
AND THE
DIVINITY AND ATONEMENT
OF
THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

BY GEORGE W. READ.

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TO ALL WHO LOVE THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IN SINCERITY AND TRUTH, GEORGE W. READ, A LOVER OF THE PRINCIPLES OF THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS, WISHETH HAPPINESS BOTH IN THIS WORLD, AND THE WORLD TO COME.

FRIENDS :

As the prosperity of that Church which the Saviour loved, and for which he shed his precious blood, is a subject which lies very near my heart, I now desire to say a few words, upon the importance of maintaining by our profession, and of exemplifying in our lives, these three fundamental doctrines contained in the Holy Scriptures, namely: The lost state of man by nature, Regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and the Supreme Divinity, and Propitiation of the Blessed Redeemer.

It is truly alarming to hear and read of the erroneous views which many have of the state of man by nature. Many hold views which have a great tendency to flatter the pride, and soothe the conscience of the natural man. But the views which the Sacred Scriptures give us with regard to the natural condition of man, are those which tend to make men humble, and the Saviour infinitely lovely. They declare that in Adam all men have died. The heart is deceitful above all things and *desperately wicked*,—who can know it? All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. There is none that doeth good, no, not one. The Apostle Paul declared, that in him, that is in his flesh, there dwelt no good thing.—The blessed Saviour says, out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. How can we then doubt

of the entire corruption of the heart of man-by nature, when we hear such language as this from him who came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them? Surely, the Son of God would not deceive his creatures, by telling them that their hearts were corrupt, when they were not so. Oh no. Deception was not in *him*. His tender invitation to all those who are weary and heavy laden to come unto him that they might find rest for their souls; his agony in the garden, when he exclaimed, oh, my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me; his sufferings on the cross, when in anguish of spirit, he cried out, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me; his prayer for his murderers, Father forgive them, for they know not what they do; all prove that whatever deception there was in man, there was none in him. No. The Son of God did not, could not deceive his creatures. Humbling as the truth may be, we all derive a sinful nature from Adam, as is plainly declared in the Bible, and if we will not believe Moses, and the Prophets, neither should we believe, though one rose from the dead, to declare it unto us. The entire sinfulness of man by nature is a doctrine which is maintained by most, if not all the Protestant confessions of faith, so called. This too has been the experience of all truly good men of all denominations. There are none of them, who have not, during some part of their religious experience, felt and lamented the entire corruption of their natures. They have felt to exclaim with St. Paul, oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death. Such was the experience of Thomas Scott, of Philip Doddridge, of John Wesley, of William Penn. And such must be the experience of every one, before they can enter the kingdom of Heaven. For how can any one pray with the Psalmist, *create* within me a *clean* heart, unless he is first convinced that he has an impure one. How can he pray for a *new* heart, unless he is first convinc-

ed that he has an old and corrupt one? They that are whole need no physician, but they that are *sick*.—Christ came not to call the righteous, but *sinners* to repentance. He came to seek and save that which was *lost*.

Such then being the state of man by nature, fallen and helpless; is there no way for his recovery? Oh yes, there is a way in which God can still be just, and yet save the returning, penitent sinner. A Saviour has died for us, while we were yet without strength and ungodly; he hath given himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. By the shedding of his most precious blood, the influences of the Holy Spirit at different times and in different measures have been poured out upon the children of men. For the Saviour is represented by the Apostle John, to be a light, which coming into the world, enlighteneth every man.

Since then a way has been opened whereby all *may* be saved, who are those that will actually be saved? The Saviour most solemnly affirms, except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. So that although the Saviour has died for all, yet none but those who are renewed by his spirit, become savingly interested in the benefit of his death.

It is, therefore, of the highest importance for every one to examine himself, that he may know whether he is regenerated or not; and also to enquire how this regeneration of the soul is effected. Is it effected by the might or power of men? Not by might or power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts. Can any one regenerate himself? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean. Has any one of *himself* any strength by which he may accomplish this work?—While we were yet *without strength*, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. Man then has no power of himself to create within himself a new heart. He has not power even so much as to create the smallest plant; how much less then has he the power to perform that

great work, the regeneration of the soul. It then must be the work of God alone. Thus the blessed Redeemer saith, verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the *Spirit*, he cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.

But it is to be feared that many in our times, who profess to believe that regeneration is the work of God, do not *feel* their entire dependence upon him as they should. But it is a blessed truth, that without Christ we can do nothing; that we cannot even so much as think a good thought without his especial aid. This doctrine has a tendency to humble the natural pride of man, and at the same time to make him love and exalt that blessed atoning Saviour, who is able and willing to help the helpless, who is rich in mercy unto all that call upon him.

This too is a doctrine, which has been maintained by all the truly pious and devout in all ages.

Milner, in his church history, speaking of the Christians in the first century, says: "They all had similar convictions of sin, of their own helplessness, of a state of perdition; and all agreed in relying on the atoning blood, perfect righteousness, and prevalent intercession of Jesus, as their only hope of Heaven. Regeneration by the Holy Ghost was their common privilege, and without his *constant influence*, they acknowledged themselves obnoxious only to sin and misery."

The writer of the sufferings of the Christians, which took place in the second century, says: "We are not competent to describe, with accuracy, nor is it in our power to express the greatness of the affliction sustained here by the Saints, the intense animosity of the Heathen against them, and the complicated sufferings of the blessed Martyrs. But the *grace of God* fought for us, preserving the weak and exposing the strong."

In the year 529, a council was held at Orange, in

France. "Adam's sin," say they, "did not only hurt the body, but the soul. We are not able, by our own natural strength, to do or think any thing, which may conduce to our salvation. We believe that Abel, Noah, Abraham, and the Fathers, have not had that faith by nature, that St. Paul commendeth in them, but by grace."

The pious Waldenses, in the 13th century, speak of the Holy Ghost thus : " We believe that he is our Comforter, proceeding from the Father, and from the Son ; by whose inspiration we pray, being renewed by him, who performeth all good works in us ; and by him we have knowledge of all truth."

The opinions of this worthy people deserve the highest veneration, for they showed by their holy lives, and by the great sufferings which they underwent for Christ, that they possessed that faith which works by love and purifies the heart.

John Wickliff, the celebrated reformer, remarks : " Human nature is wholly at enmity with God. We cannot think a good thought, unless Jesus send it.— We cannot perform a good work, unless it be properly his good work. His mercy prevents us, so that we receive grace ; and it follows us so as to help us, and keep us in grace. Heal us, good Lord, we have no merit ! Give us grace to know that all thy gifts be of thy goodness only."

Milner remarks concerning Luther, That one of his great excellencies, as a Divine, consists in the perspicuous and just order in which he constantly places the several doctrines of practical Christianity and their effects. He is, on all occasions, solicitous to show, that the Christian life begins with, depends on, and is perfected through *grace*.

Luther, in his remarks upon the magnificat, saith, " No man can rightly know God, or understand the word of God, unless he immediately receive it from the Holy Spirit ; neither can any one receive it from

the Holy Spirit, except he find it by *experience in himself*; and in this experience the Holy Ghost teacheth, as in his proper school; out of which school nothing is taught but mere talk."

Melancthon says, in his annotations upon John vi. "All those who apply themselves seriously to Christianity, and are not satisfied until they have found its effectual work upon their hearts, redeeming them from sin, do feel that no knowledge effectually prevails to the producing of this, but that which proceeds from the warm influence of God's Spirit upon the heart, and from the comfortable shining of his light upon their understanding. In the first public confession of the French Churches, published in the year 1559, Article 4, is found the following language, in relation to the Scripture. "We know those books to be canonical, and the most certain rule of our faith, not so much by the common accord and consent of the Church, as by the testimony and *inward persuasion* of the Holy Spirit."

There is contained a like assertion in the fifth article of the confession of faith, of the Churches of Holland, confirmed by the Synod of Dort. "We receive these books only for holy and canonical,—not so much because the church receives and approves them, as because the Spirit of God doth *witness in our hearts* that they are of God.

Philip Doddridge in that excellent work written by him, entitled "The rise and progress of religion in the soul," addresses the reader thus: "Know in the general, that if you are a christian indeed, you have been renewed in the spirit of your mind, Eph. ii. 23, so renewed as to be regenerate and born again. It is not enough to have assumed a new name, to have been brought under some new restraints, or to have made a partial change in some particulars of your conduct.—The change must be *great and universal*. Let me add, if you are Christian, you are in the main, *spiritu-*

ally minded, as knowing that it is life and peace ; whereas to be carnally minded is death. Let me farther lead you into some reflections on the temper of your heart toward the blessed spirit. If we have not the *Spirit* of Christ, we are none of his. If we are not led by the *Spirit* of God, we are not the children of God:

John Howe remarks, speaking of Divine Love : “ We can as soon pluck down a star or create a new sun, as give ourselves this love without his aid.”

John Wesley also says, “ The author of faith and salvation is God alone. There is no more of power than of merit in man ; but as all merit is in the Son of God, in what he has done and suffered for us, so all power is in the *Spirit of God*. And, therefore, every man, in order to believe unto salvation, must receive the Holy Ghost.”

Brainerd was accustomed to point out to his hearers, their deplorable state by nature as fallen creatures, their inability of themselves to extricate themselves from it, and then to show them their absolute *need* of Christ, and his ability and willingness to save them.

Robert Barclay also says, everything which is excellent and noble and worthy in the Christian faith is to be ascribed to the *Spirit*, without which it can no more exist than the material world without the sun.— It is by this Spirit, that they have declared that they were converted to God, and which has purified them from the world, and fortified them in their weakness, consoled them in their affliction, rendered them firm in temptation, and which has made them triumph in persecution.

To such language as the above every truly pious heart will, I trust, readily respond. Yes, it is one of the most blessed truths contained in the sacred oracles, that by the Spirit of God alone we are able to overcome the corrupt propensities of our natural hearts.— It makes man daily dependent on his Creator for his

spiritual food, even as a child depends upon his parent for its bodily food.

How sweet and encouraging then is the declaration of our Heavenly Father, that he is willing and ready to grant unto us the influences of his Spirit, if we do but humbly ask for them, sincerely desiring to turn from all our iniquities. Though we are thus entirely dependant upon the Holy Ghost, yet this affords to no one a just ground for despair. For Christ has given himself a ransom for all, and sincerely wills that all should be saved. He therefore at times visits every man with the influences of his Spirit. If the individual thus visited, yields to the gentle admonitions of the heavenly Teacher, he will sweeten and prepare him for Heaven. But if he constantly resist him, in such a manner, as to provoke him for ever to depart from him, then, even in this life, his case is hopeless—For the Lord saith, my spirit shall not always strive with man, ~~as it may be properly rendered according~~ or ~~in man, as it may be properly rendered according~~ to the Hebrew.

How important then it is that we grieve not the Spirit of God, that we acknowledge with humble thankfulness our entire dependence upon it. Oh let us remember that the Holy Ghost is truly and properly God, and when we sin against him, we sin against God.—Hear what Christ himself has said on this most solemn subject. *Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men : but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him ; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven, neither in this world nor in the world to come.* Solemn and awful words, enough to make high professors, who make light of the influences of the Spirit of God, to tremble.

Again, how are we cautioned not to grieve the Spirit, or to quench it. We are solemnly told, that if we

walk after the flesh we shall die, but if we through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body we shall live. How vain then are the hopes of all those professors, who are walking after the flesh, who show by the temper and spirit of their minds, that the love of God is not in them; but that they love the promotion of their own selfish interests more than God. Oh let such remember that if they die in this state, their souls will most assuredly be lost, and that forever. What will it profit them to gain all the pomp, honor, and splendor of this vain world, and after all lose their own souls? Oh that such would heed the admonitions of the Spirit of God in their souls, which at times sets their sins in order before them, and shows them the necessity of being prepared to meet their God in peace. Let them consider that the wages of sin is death.—That though they may deceive man, they cannot deceive God. His eye never slumbers nor sleeps, even now he knows the inmost recesses of their heart. Oh ye blind professors of the religion of a crucified Jesus—Faithfulness and love to your poor perishing souls, bid me speak plainly to you. Know that except ye repent, ye will all assuredly perish, as sure as there is a God in heaven. How is the name of Christ dishonored by you. Ye profess to love him in words, yet your actions show that you hate him. You daily crucify him by your unhallowed lusts, and vain conversations. And thereby you greatly dishonor the cause of truth, and cause it to be evil spoken of in the world. Be not deceived, God is not mocked: what ye sow that shall ye also reap. Oh that the Lord would incline your hearts to turn unto him. For guilty as you have been, if you do now sincerely and unfeignedly turn to him with an earnest desire to repent, and to turn from all your iniquities, he will regenerate your souls, and prepare you for heaven; because he delights not in the death of the wicked, but rather that he should turn and live.

How vastly important then it is, that all Christians believe in, and maintain the solemn doctrine of Regeneration; that this great work is wrought in the soul, not by the power of man, but by the power of God.

But there still remains another most important doctrine, to which I now desire to call the attention of all who love the truth in simplicity of heart, namely, that of the sacrifice and Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are those, who think that man is not a fallen creature, and therefore he does not stand in need of an atoning Saviour. But not so does he feel, who is truly convinced of his sins. He sees that he must have a Saviour or perish, and that Saviour must be an Almighty one. Yes, it is true, that without shedding of blood there is no regeneration; that all the influences of Divine Grace which ever visit the heart of man, have been procured for him through the cruel and bitter sufferings of a crucified Saviour. Oh that all Christians might feel the importance of maintaining this doctrine, not merely from an intellectual, but from a heartfelt conviction of its truth. When the Divinity and atonement of the Son of God is denied, then it is that the flood gates of error and delusion are opened—then the doctrine of human depravity, and consequently necessity of regeneration is denied—man is left to grope in the darkness of nature, without any thing to brighten his prospects beyond the grave.

How ought we to pity those who deny the necessity of an atoning and Almighty Saviour. We ought not to revile them, but rather strive to win them to the truth, by the loveliness of our example. Did not the Apostle feel thus, when he exclaimed, Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they may be saved, for I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not yet submitted to the righteousness of God, for *Christ* is

the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Oh, it is painful to think, how many there are whose talents and capacities, if sanctified by Divine Grace, would make them ornaments to the Church of God, and blessings to mankind; but who yet are now employing their time and talents in spreading these most soul-destroying errors, namely, the denial of the entire corruption of the natural heart of man, the consequent necessity of the new birth, and the Supreme Divinity and atonement of the blessed Redeemer. Oh that all christians, who profess to believe in these most solemn doctrines, might not serve to prejudice the minds of these who are thus wandering in the paths of error, against the truth, by unkind and harsh treatment; but that on the contrary, they would strive to do them good, by ever treating them with kindness, and showing them, that they seek the welfare of their poor perishing souls. May we remember that though they are thus in error, Christ has died for every one of them. For he is good to *all*, and his tender mercies are over all his works. Let us put on then, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, tenderness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering.—Then should we in some measure possess the spirit of the blessed Saviour, when looking down upon Jerusalem, he wept over it, saying, Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them, that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children as a hen doth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not. Oh how heavenly is the spirit of the gospel. Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use and persecute you. Be ye merciful even as your Heavenly Father is merciful. Consider how great is the mercy of God, then imitate him, even as he commands us.

With regard to the divinity and atonement of Christ, as it respects myself, I am as sure that Christ is an Al-

mighty and atoning Saviour, as I am of my own personal identity, or that the sun shines, or that fire burns, because the infallible Spirit of God witnesses the truth of the same in my own soul, and therefore I need no logical arguments in order to convince me of this truth. But as others may not have the same assurance, I will mention some passages from sacred writ, which if received with meek and childlike simplicity, will confirm the truth of what I have said. In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. Now this verse is thus rendered in that excellent version, the Syriac: In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and God was the word. Padre Sciohas, y el verbo era Dios. Di-odati, a celebrated Italian scholar, E la parola era Dio. Luther, und Gott war des wort. The Portuguese has e o verbo era Deos. If we then take the literal simple meaning of the verse as it is thus rendered in several versions, we must own that Christ is truly and properly God. Again the blessed John says of Christ, that this is the true God and eternal life.—The words immediately preceding are, in his Son Jesus Christ. Now the word this must evidently refer to Christ, since it is the nearest antecedent. Thus it is in the Syriac. Luther, in his Bible, has italicised this passage, thus showing the high regard he had for it.

And now what more remains for me, but to address a few words to the several classes of Christians who profess to believe these three fundamental doctrines of the gospel, of which I have been now treating.

Episcopalians, beware of trusting in your forms and ceremonies for the salvation of your souls. Remember, that in vain the organ peals its solemn notes, in vain the forms of prayer are repeated, in vain the priest clothes himself in his ministerial robes, unless pure incense from the heart ascend to Heaven. Man

looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart. Thy Thomas Scott was a good man, though he was attached to thy forms. Oh be like him, yea much better.

Baptists—I once was among you, but from convictions of duty I have left you. It is on my Spirit to tell you to beware, how you depart from the good old principles of former Baptists. Formerly the Baptists were a Godly sect, they believed that their ministers should be called of God to preach, and when so called, that they should preach by the Spirit. They sought not the applause of men, but of God. Is it so now? The Lord is thy Judge. Thou hast had a Samuel Peirce, thou hast a Judson still. Remember, a form of Godliness without the power is of no avail in the sight of God.

Congregationalists.—Beware of the new Divinity so called—beware how thy ministers trust in their education and the strength of their mental powers, as the necessary qualifications for a minister of Christ. Remember, that the only seal and proper qualification is the Spirit of God. Without this, the most splendid talents will have been bestowed in vain. Thou hast had a Doddridge. He died as he lived, a Christain. Oh that all of you possessed his spirit. Thou hast had a Brainard and a Taylor. They lived not long, but well—peace be to their ashes, for their souls are now in heaven.

Methodists—Remember, that whatever efforts you may make to spread the gospel, still you are entirely dependant on the Spirit of God. Says not thy Wesley the same? Not only acknowledge thy dependance, but *feel* it. For a dependance that is not felt, is no dependence at all. Remember to insist too, on the necessity and privilege of entire sanctification in the present life. It is a doctrine of God. Thy Fletcher, believed and preached it. And how did he die? as he lived. His last end was peace, even that peace of

God, which passeth all understanding. Oh, that all Methodists were like him. This world would then be an Eden indeed.

Friends—Ye are indeed bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. Oh, remember the high and holy profession which ye make. Ye profess to come out of the world and be separate in every thing. Oh still continue to maintain your faithful testimonies against the form of religion without the power, against receiving or giving money for preaching, against preaching in any other way, except by the Spirit of God. Remember thy Thomas Loe, now he lived and died. Remember too, those faithful ones, who even in our own country suffered death for the sake of their religion.—Remember too, thy William Penn, who although a learned man, and even conversant in the society of kings, still preached by the Spirit, in the same manner, as did the humble mechanics, who were called of God to preach, in the same manner that he was. O, I beseech you, have not the form of Quakerism, without the power.

A word to all formal professors of all denominations. Ye poor, lifeless, dead souls, ye who profess one thing and do another, ye who confess a Saviour with your lips, and crucify him with your hearts, ye stumbling blocks, hear the word of the Lord. So sure as you do not repent of your sins and experience the new birth, so surely will the Blessed Saviour say unto you, on that day, when all nations shall be gathered before him, Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels. Faithfulness and love to your souls bids me tell you this. Oh ye poor deluded ones, there is no need of your perishing. For Christ has died for every one of you, and even now he stands at the door of your hearts and knocks for entrance, if the day of your visitation is not past.

Once more, fellow Christians of all denominations, remember that the Saviour has said, A new command-

ment give I unto you, that ye *love* one another. Oh, see to it, that ye possess this love. It is a heaven born principle, and makes its possessor resemble its lovely author. God is *Love*, and he that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.

Farewell.

GEORGE W. READ.

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Appeal to all denomina-
tions of Christians.

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